The WOOD DUCK

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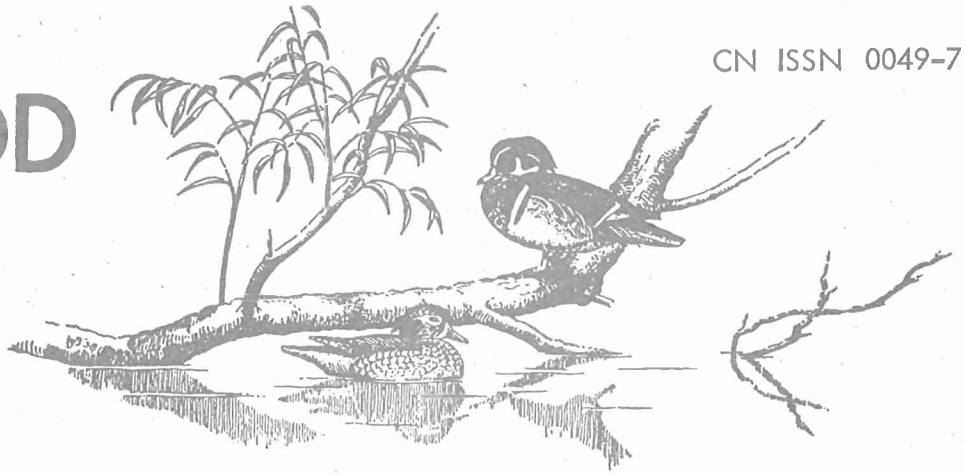

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

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Volume 51 Number 6 February 1998

The Threat to the Van Wagner's Ponds and Red Hill Marsh

by Don McLean

Information presented at a January 19 meeting indicates that the threat posed to Van Wagner's Ponds and Red Hill Marsh is greater than previously indicated. As noted in last month's *Wood Duck*, the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth and the Ontario Ministry of Transport (MOT) are proposing to rebuild the Burlington Street interchange with the QEW. This is being done to accommodate the proposed addition of an interchange for the Red Hill Creek Expressway which is to be located between Burlington Street and Highway 20.

The Region and MOT have put forward three "options" for the new Burlington Street-QEW interchange. Two of them require widening of the QEW by two lanes, while the third proposes also adding a 2-lane collector lane system. Altogether the QEW would end up 10-12 lanes wide. All widening, of course, would be on top of Van Wagner's Ponds and/or Red Hill Marsh.

The January 19 meeting was attended by over 100 people including representatives from many organizations. They all unanimously declared that none of the options are acceptable. The President of the Beach Preservation Association described the proposals as unforgiveable and declared: "In the 1990s you know better". She asked what one over-turned chemical truck would do to the beach, lake or marsh areas, and pointed out that the emissions and runoff from the roadway would poison the wetlands.

The owner of Baranga's restaurant warned that if the proposals were acted on, "you won't see any birds there for many years". He declared: "If the birds disappear, I'm sure humans will too".

The Chairman of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority noted that there is not a major community anywhere in the world that is not trying to improve their waterfront areas, and asked what compensation could be given for the loss of the marshes.

A scout leader noted that none of the proposals offered any pedestrian or cycling access across the QEW between the Woodward neighbourhood and the beach. He reminded the officials that it is "nice to move all these vehicles around, but don't forget the children".

The President of Community Action for Parkdale East pointed out that the area was already badly abused with leachate leaking from the closed Brampton landfill. She reminded the officials that the Sierra Club national report card had criticized the operation of the Woodward Avenue sewage treatment plant and that the International Joint Commission continued to call for cleanup in the harbour area.

HNC Conservation Director, Brian McHattie, provided detailed information on the biotic significance of the marshes to migratory birds, turtles and other species. He noted that coastal wetlands like these areas are a matter of international concern in the Great Lakes Basin. Like

CONTENTS

Fisherville Bird Count
Page 108
Two Bad Days at Pelee?
Page 111
Alternative Food Source
Page 112
Goshawk's Law
Page 114
Shock Absorbers of the Shoreline
Page 122
Camping in the Galapagos
Page 123
Spotlight on the MourningCloak
Page 128

many other speakers, Mr. McHattie declared that all three options were unacceptable and that the expressway in Red Hill Valley which is driving these proposals should not be built.

Many other citizens spoke out against both the expressway and the changes to the interchange. One pointed out that his father's land in Red Hill Valley had been expropriated for 5 cents a square foot in the 1950s with a solemn promise that the land would never be used for anything but parkland.

Mayor Morrow of Hamilton also addressed the meeting and joined in condemning the three options. He called for efforts to improve Windermere Basin and praised HNC proposals for that area.

Over the next several months, several more public meetings are supposed to take place concerning the expressway and Burlington Street proposals. Contact Brian McHattie or Don McLean if you would like advance notice.

The 1997 Fisherville Christmas Bird Count

The 1997 Fisherville Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, January 3, 1998. At the start of the count the wind was blowing strongly out of the south west. This was to continue all day. A few spits of rain occurred during the night and day with a fairly heavy rain commencing around dusk. The result of the weather was the owls did not respond or could not be heard over the howling wind. The lack of snow cover resulted in the birds not being present at feeders or they just plain stayed low and out of sight.

In the field during the day there were 41 observers in 17-18 parties who had come from as far as Midland in the north and east, and Delhi in the west to take part. They searched the towns and countryside for everything they could find. Nine feeder watchers also contributed to the cause. The final tally was 28,392 individuals of 86 species.

Noteworthy birds found on the count included the count's first Orange-crowned Warbler by Sandra Maxwell and a Pine Warbler by Mark Jennings. Between Peacock Point and the Nanticoke hydro-electric plant were three rafts of Greater Scaup totalling over 11,000 birds. The Snowy Owl seen Friday at the junction of regional roads #20 and #9 could not be found on count day.

The birders for the most part had a very good day despite windy conditions where were compensated for by the mild temperatures. One group found an active frog. Counters left for home looking forward to improving the count on next year's scheduled date of January 2, 1999.

Results

42°50'N 79°50'W centre at jct. Haldimand-Norfolk Regional Rd. 12 and 5th conc. Town of Haldimand to include Fisherville, Balmoral, Cheapside, Cayuga, Selkirk, Clanbrassil, Kohler and Nelles Corners. January 3, 1998, 12:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Temperature 43° to 46° F. Wind SW 20-30 mph. 0" snow cover. Still water partly open. Moving water open. A.M. overcast with odd light rain shower. P.M. cloudy with the odd light rain shower. Observers: 41 in field in 17-18 parties (non-owling) plus 9 at feeders (30 hours); 17.75 hours and 223 miles owling. Total party hours 140.75; party miles 950; 71.25 hours and 65 miles on foot, 69.5 hours and 885 miles by car.

Double-crested Cormorant 1, Great Blue Heron 11, Tundra Swan 40, Canada Goose 927, American Black Duck 45, Mallard 308, Gadwall 2, Canvasback 1, Redhead 1, Greater Scaup 11587, Lesser Scaup 19, scaup sp. 2, Oldsquaw 56, White-winged Scoter 1, Common Goldeneye 110, Bufflehead 556, Common Merganser 202, Red-breasted Merganser 73, duck sp. 5, Bald Eagle 1 immature, Northern Harrier 45, Sharp-shinned Hawk 4, Cooper's Hawk 4, Red-tailed Hawk 237, Rough-legged Hawk 14, American Kestrel 54, Ring-necked Pheasant 4, Ruffed Grouse 6, Wild Turkey 14, Bonaparte's Gull 441, Ring-billed Gull 1708, Herring Gull 378, Glaucous Gull 1, Great Black-backed Gull 47, Rock Dove 513, Mourning Dove 287, Eastern Screech Owl 35, Great Horned Owl 9, Snowy Owl cw, Long-eared Owl 11, Short-eared Owl 23, Northern Saw-whet Owl 1, Red-bellied Woodpecker 20, Downy Woodpecker 92, Hairy Woodpecker 31, Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker 6, Pileated Woodpecker 1, Horned Lark 40, Blue Jay 122, American Crow 172, Black-capped Chickadee 432, Tufted Titmouse 4, Red-breasted Nuthatch 14, White-breasted Nuthatch 76, Brown Creeper 16, Carolina Wren 1, Winter Wren 4, Golden-crowned Kinglet 44, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2, Eastern Bluebird 2, American Robin 1, Northern Mockingbird 4, Northern Shrike 7, European Starling 4703, Orange-crowned Warbler 1, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler 1, Pine Warbler 1, Northern Cardinal 113, Rufous-sided Towhee 1,

American Tree Sparrow 752, Field Sparrow 1, Song Sparrow 42, Swamp Sparrow 16, White-throated Sparrow 13, White-crowned Sparrow 2, Dark-eyed (Slate-coloured) Junco 281, Snow Bunting 1, Red-winged Blackbird 1, meadowlark sp. 5, Rusty Blackbird 1, Common Grackle 1, Brown-headed Cowbird 21, Purple Finch 2, House Finch 498, White-winged Crossbill 6, Common Redpoll 219, Pine Siskin 8, American Goldfinch 335, House Sparrow 2492.

Total 86 species, 28,392 individuals.

Participants: Compiler - John Miles, P.O. Box 449, Jarvis, Ontario N0A 1J0; Alfred Adamo, Colin Bell, Eleanor Bell, Drew Campbell, Glenn Coady, Mark Cranford, Floyd Deiter, John Dickie Jr., Lois Evans, Marcya Foster, Janet Gifford, Roger Gifford, Jerry Guild, Dorothy Hadlington, Sid Hadlington, Kevin Hannah, Betty Hoskin, Mark Jennings, Barry Jones, Rick Ludkin, Sandra Mathieson, Sandra Maxwell, Hugh McArthur, Kevin McLaughlin, Elizabeth Mihalj, Jamie Miles, John Miles, Steve Miles, Matt Mills, Don Perks, George Pond, Shirley Pond, Tom Reavly, Kayo Roy, Diane Salter, Al Sandilands, David Sandilands, Neil Sandilands, Betsy Smith, Jim Smith, Pat Smith, Brian Stewart, Joanne Stewart, Mike Street, Dave Sutton, Pat Thomas, Adam Timpf, Doug Timpf, Matt Timpf, Linda Wilson (Norfolk Field Naturalists and the Haldimand Bird Observatory).

Moths and Caterpillars Overcome Ice Storm

HNC Monthly Meeting Report

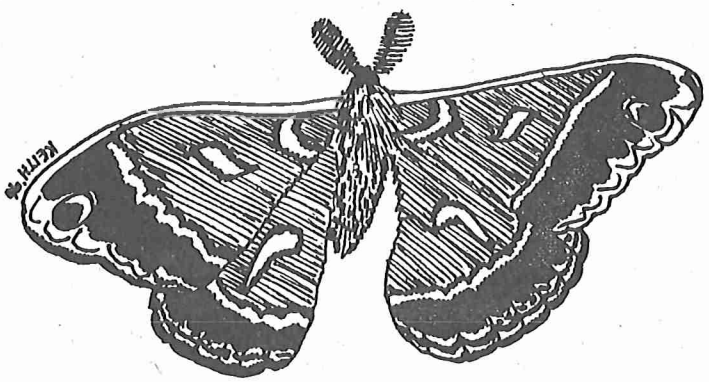
by Jim and Jean Stollard

The Great Ice Storm of '98 had an impact on our Club when our guest speaker, Dan Stuckey, was forced to cancel his appearance because he was unable to get here through the storm. Fortunately for us, Bill Randall came to the rescue with an excellent presentation on Caecropia moths, a species he has studied for many years.

Bill took us through the life cycle of the Caecropia, from the time it hatches from the creamy white egg until it emerges from its cocoon the following spring. The female lays 300 eggs in total but only a few mature, thanks to the toll taken by Yellow Jackets, birds and, when they come to pupate, by a parasitic fly larvae which kills the caterpillar, often before it can finish spinning its cocoon. The Caecropia moth has a wing span of 5½ - 7" and is a cumbersome flier. They have only a rudimentary proboscis as they do not eat as adults.

The moth hatches from the egg as a small black caterpillar and immediately begins to eat. This first instar (the stage of its life between moltings), is followed by four successive stages during which the caterpillar grows and changes colour. The second instar is yellow while the third instar is greenish. During the third instar, red tubercles form on the caterpillar. These tubercles become orange in the fourth instar. By the fifth and last instar, the caterpillar is long, about 4", and plump, having spent the summer eating a variety of vegetation including apple, cherry, willow, elderberry and maple.

In mid-August the last caterpillar of the year's hatching purges itself of food and looks for a place to spin its cocoon. As the Caecropia is a silk moth, its cocoon is made up of a double lining of silk. The inner casing, containing the pupa, is smooth and oval, while a layer of silk between the inner and outer casings helps to support the pupa. The outer casing is papery but tough and in order for it to emerge, it is necessary for the moth to secrete a liquid to dissolve the silk. Encased in its cushion of silk, the Caecropia passes the winter until early spring.



At the end of May or the first week in June, the adult moths emerge from their cocoons and immediately begin to mate. The female, identified by her narrower antennae, sends out pheramones which attract the male. They remain coupled throughout the night and day, then the female lays her eggs and dies, and the cycle begins anew.

Next Month: Nature and Wildlife Photography with Robert McCaw.

Nominations Sought for Environmentalist of the Year Awards

Nominations are being sought for the 1997 Environmentalist of the Year Awards. The HNC is one of six organizations who sponsor the awards given out since 1979 to individuals and groups who have made a significant contribution to the protection and/or enhancement of the environment in Hamilton-Wentworth.

Nominations must be submitted by April 7, 1998 to the awards committee, c/o 269 Wexford Avenue South, Hamilton, Ontario L8K 2P4. More information can be obtained by calling John Struger at 547-5116.

The awards include the Dr. Victor Ceciloni Award as well as awards of merit and youth recognition awards. They will be presented at the 19th annual Environmentalist of the Year Award Dinner which will be held this year on Wednesday, June 3rd.

In selecting recipients, the judges consider both the nature of the environmental activities of the nominee as resulting achievements with regards to the following criteria: years of involvement; impact to society and the ecosystem; community involvement; educational contribution; uniqueness; continuing commitment to environmental issues; and letters of support.

Nominations should describe in detail the nature and purpose of the environmental activity undertaken by the nominee, the resulting achievements, and the reasons you believe the nomination is of merit. Letters of reference and additional information should be included.

1997 Was Warmest Year on Record

by Don McLean

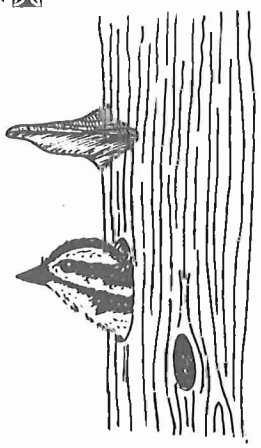
It has been confirmed that 1997 was the warmest year since record-keeping began in 1866. That means the five warmest years on record have occurred in this decade, with 1995 as the second warmest and 1996 in fifth spot behind 1990 and 1991. These records have been set despite significant cooling events in the 1990s such as the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in late 1991 and unprecedented depletion of stratospheric ozone levels.

The 1997 global temperature figures have eliminated a few more of the sceptics unconvinced of the role of humans in altering the planet's climate. The great ice storm of 1998 may eliminate a few more. Weather extremes are one of the predicted effects of the continuing increase in human-created greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, nitros oxides and methane. In the last year, Canadians have been confronted with massive flooding in Manitoba, Quebec and BC, as well as major grass fires in December in Alberta.

The trend towards more extreme weather is being closely tracked by the insurance industry which has faced record claims in recent years. During the 1980s losses from weather-related natural disasters varied between $1 and $10 billion per year on a global scale. Since 1990, the figure has never fallen below $15 billion and in 1996 alone it hit $60 billion. These trends have convinced many large insurance companies to begin lobbying governments for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A recently-released study from Environment Canada warns that Ontario could experience an average annual warming from 3 to 8 Centigrade degrees by the end of the next century. *Adapting to Climate Variability and Change in Ontario* is one of a series examining the potential effects of global climate change.

Among the predicted effects of the warming in Ontario are lower water levels in the Great Lakes and a northward shift in the boreal forest accompanied by an increase in forest fires, insects and disease. The study also warns of an increase in the frequency and severity of droughts and increases in lake temperatures that will alter aquatic ecosystems.



Getting Off the Grid

In the wake of the great ice storm of 1998, the Dundas Conserver Society is sponsoring a particularly timely meeting on "getting off the grid". On Friday, February 6th at 7:30 pm, Debra White will be speaking at Dundas Baptist Church on a self-sustaining house operating in Toronto. This house has no hydro, water or sewer hook-up. She calls it "Healthy House - the self-sustaining home". The meeting is open to the public. For more info call 628-6737.

Two Bad Days at Pelee?

By Ursula Kolster

The sun was shining when we arrived at Point Pelee to take part in the annual Bailey Birdathon. So far the promise of the coldest May for almost 80 years was holding true. Not only was the weather outlook bad but the promise of good birding was just as bleak. The big crowd from previous years was missing. Yesterday, there had been hail. Birds and birders had got their information from the birding hotline and stayed away.

Last year's excitement about the Prothonotary Warbler, this rare and most beautiful bird, was still fresh in my mind. Would I see it again? That's why I first headed to Tilden's Woods to check this likely habitat. And sure enough, there it was so bright and easily seen against the brackish swamp.

While looking at this spectacular bird for a long time, a few other birds showed up. Another yellow bird, the Common Yellow Warbler was darting across the surface searching for insects, and a Chestnut-Sided Warbler was hopping beside the boardwalk. This bird was exhausted and could be approached within a few feet for a good look. It made no effort to fly away. A male Yellow-rumped Warbler caught my eye. It looked pretty in the late afternoon sun with his bright yellow crown, his yellow shoulder patches, and the yellow rump. It was flitting and seemed to hover over the surface trying to get some of the scarce insects. The bright reflection of this common bird in the water was worth the watch.

Since the weather was not choice for bird watching, I had to make an effort to cover a lot of ground to try and find more birds. Pelee has this enchantment, you never know when you will be on the right trail and at the right time. It was about to happen. Someone had spotted the now rare Henslow's Sparrow, and several birders had already congregated. This secretive sparrow of the fields was creeping under cover through the grass. At last our long wait ended as the bird emerged for an unforgettable moment. This inconspicuous bird would be hard to find without help.

Another rare sparrow arrived the next day, the Grasshopper Sparrow was also spotted in the grass, and took a long time to present itself. Both sparrows were lifebirds for me as for many others. Some other striking birds were seen including an immature male Summer Tanager. This bird chose a picnic area for its favourite spot where it stayed for four days, checking the tables and the grills for food. It had a bright deep red back and tail and a salmon-coloured breast which was wonderful to look at. A rich blue indigo bunting, the only bird that appears to be totally blue, crossed my path. Magnolia Warblers were numerous and brilliant. More delights such as Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers with their intense chestnut-colour were seen. Northern Parulas were surprisingly plentiful in a backgound of busy interruptions from nesting Orchard and Baltimore Orioles.

Birding at the tip, the most southern point of Canada was not rewarding at all this year. Only a few gulls and terns endured the cold wind there. Hillmann's marsh appeared to be more promising. On arrival at the parking lot, excited birders pointed up to the sky and shouted, "Bald Eagle". I could hardly make out the bird in the distance, but I could just see the major fieldmarks, flashing in the sun, the white tail and head, and broad wings that spread 7-8 feet.

The marsh provided calling Moorhens and American Coots. While these birds were hidden, a Marsh Wren was sitting on top of a cattail and cheerfully singing its reedy gurgling song that ends with a guttural sound. Suddenly there was silence. No bird was to be seen. Why? I looked up and the king of the birds was soaring above the marsh. So close that everyone was hushed into complete silence and watched in awe.

I had wanted to spot more species than last year, but I ended up with the same total of 98. Not an impressive number, but nevertheless I saw 7 lifebirds. That's Pelee!

Point Pelee National Park Camping Trip 1998

Tent only group-camping has been arranged inside the park for the Victoria Day weekend. Arrive earliest on Friday, 15th May, and leave Monday. Beginners are welcome. Spaces are limited, so call Pierre now to find out how a spot can be assured.

Pre-payment, waiting list, and cancellation procedures are in effect. Motelers should make their own bookings now. Call to find out about non-tent camping arrangements outside the park. The fee is at cost and is the same regardless of day of arrival or departure. Call Pierre Arnold, 648-2519.

Lunch with a Water Snake

by Bruce Duncan

In June of 1997, I stopped for lunch on Lennon Road beside Fletcher Creek. The day was sunny and I wanted to watch the stream which flows beside the road there in case I might spot a brook trout. Brook trout spawn here each fall.

A northern water snake perhaps 50 centimetres long swam underwater and stopped right beside me. It rested motionless on the bottom, looking up but with its head completely submerged. I watched to see if it might catch any of the minnows swimming nearby. Although the fish came near, it did not move at all. After several minutes, I realized that this snake was not surfacing for air. I glanced at my watch to note the time. It rested on the bottom, quite motionless.

After 26 minutes, my lunch was finished and I had to leave. In all that time, the water snake had moved only once but had remained submerged during the move. It was still in the water as I drove away. I do not know how long water snakes are capable of staying underwater, but if this individual is typical of the species, it is well-adapted to its habitat.

CSA Provides An Alternative Food Source

by Don McLean
with help from Melanie and Alvaro

"Plan B Organic Farms" is a community supported agriculture (CSA) project which provided the editor and his family with fresh produce last year. Our experience with locally-grown organic vegetables has wonderfully transformed our diet (and cut 10 pounds off the editor's midriff), so we wanted to share it with Wood Duck readers.

Community supported agriculture is a system of growing and distributing organic produce which restores the link between farmers and urbanites. While Plan B is the first CSA in the Hamilton area, it is one of more than 600 in North America, and CSAs have been operating in Japan and Western Europe since the mid-1960s.

The procedure is simple. In early spring city dwellers purchase subscription shares of the year's harvest from a local organic farm. Shareholders agree to accept whatever shortages of specific crops that the season may bring, and share in the bounty of excesses. In effect, the consumers share the risks with the producer. By paying for their produce at the beginning of the growing season, CSA members collectively provide the start-up capital necessary for farmers to purchase seeds and supplies and to eliminate their reliance on bank loans.

Buying from a CSA also supports your local economy and substantially reduces pollution from packaging and long-distance transport of food.

Plan B (as opposed to the usual Plan A of buying whatever the supermarket offers), grew food organically on a small farm near Peter's Corners west of Greensville. Organic farming uses methods designed to promote soil fertility without the use of pesticides and herbicides. Weeds and pests are controlled through such means as crop rotation, cultivation and biological controls. Organic matter is used to naturally regenerate the soil in place of artificial and destructive chemical fertilizers.

Every Saturday for eighteen weeks we received at least two bags of fresh-picked mixed produce, which we picked up at a nearby depot. It was like Christmas once a week. In the first place, we were never certain exactly what vegetables to expect, so every bag was like a present.

Then came the identification process. Plan B provided over 40 different greens and vegetables as well as an array of fresh herbs. Nearly every week there was something we didn't recognize. Almost everything came complete with roots (and tops). Nibble on the root - no, that's not very edible. Try a leaf. Yes, this must be the part we're supposed to eat. The accompanying recipes gave us clues to names – things like Bok Choi, Arrugula and Chinese Cabbage – and we pulled out field guides and garden books to try and name the rest.

We dined on amazing salads and experimented with soups and meatless meals. When we originally decided to try out Plan B, we figured that the produce would be a little more expensive than the pesticide-laden stuff from the local supermarket. But when we added up our food budget, we found that we were

saving money hand over fist, not because we had miscalculated on the price of the vegetables, but because the weekly bounty from Plan B had knocked most of the meat out of our diet. When you know there is another huge pile of vegetables arriving on Saturday, you become wonderfully creative in preparing and consuming the pile you got the previous Saturday. Almost unintentionally, we moved a long way towards becoming vegetarians and a lot closer to a healthy diet. Along with everything from beans to zucchini and a wealth of fresh herbs, we also got canteloupe and watermelon. In its first season, Plan B fed 85 households. We suspect they will all be back for more in 1998. We certainly will be.

A full share in Plan B costs $450 and is rewarded by four bags of produce a week for the growing season from June 15 to October 15. Half shares are available at $250. Our family of three found it challenging to consume the produce from a half share before the next batch arrived a week later. You probably need four vegetarians to handle a full share, although you may want to share your share with friends or neighbours.

Plan B was initiated by a group of young people interested in working in sustainable agriculture, but faced with no opportunities to obtain such employment. They turned to entrepreneurship and started their own farm. They were assisted by a start-up grant from Human Resources Development Canada's 'youth entrepreneurship' program which paid a weekly stipend to eight youth and an experienced organic grower who acted as their mentor.

Two of the youth, provided the *Wood Duck* with the following account of their experiences and the plans for 1998.

"We trained all year under an organic farmer, Grant Brooks of Mississauga, in an apprenticeship format. We also received business training from the Business Advisory Centre. These two components ensured that we would be prepared to run our own business in the second season without government assistance.

"In order to receive the startup grant, Plan B needed a community sponsor, a group with a Board that could monitor our activities. The local chapter of Canadian Organic Growers agreed to do this for us and also counselled and provided resources through the season.

"Our first attempt at farming and business was a success. We gave people more food than they could use and now have a happy customer base that we are hoping to expand next year. We all learned a lot about business and management and how difficult it can be.

"Plan B is splitting into two parts in 1998. One group will be running a small CSA in Flamborough as well as an organic bistro and juice bar on Locke Street South in Hamilton called *Edible Roots*. The other group will be operating a large scale CSA in cooperation with the Community Health Centre and their youth training program on land closer to the city in order to make it more accessible for people to come and see what sustainable agriculture is all about.

"So if you are interested in receiving freshly picked, locally grown, organic produce at a price that is much more affordable than the organic produce at the grocery store, and you want to support ecological agriculture initiatives in your region that will preserve our farmland for the future, give us a call at 522-9346 and ask how you can share in the harvest of 1998."

You can email Plan B at planbcsa@hotmail.com

The Bird Guy

by Brian McHattie

Many of you may now be aware that a new show on birding has been running on the Life Network these past few months. It's good to see bird-watching going mainstream! Two of the shows included HNC content: one on the Harbour Cleanup and the other on the value of the Escarpment featuring Matt Mills and yours truly.

The 'bird guy', Fred Yackman recently sent me a note letting me know that the first 13 episodes were received quite favourably by the viewing public and that the Life Network is currently considering a second season of shows. Fred has asked me to let people know that now would be a good time to let the Life Network know if you enjoyed the shows, or feel that they contribute to the promotion of birding. If you feel so inclined, you can contact them to share your views at 1-800-555-5684, or via email at info@lifenetwork.ca

Goshawk's Law: A Guide to Beginning Birders

by Sylfest Muldal

The following article is reprinted from The Blue Bill, *the newsletter of the Kingston Field Naturalists. It has also appeared in the* PICA, *the newsletter of the Calgary Field Naturalists Society.*

Let's suppose you're new at this game, and you're keen. Having seen those magnificient slow-motion eagles on TV and then those tiny birds flitting over your garden in such a hurry, you can't wait to learn bird identification. I think it's time for you to come on a field trip. You'll get quite an education from us experienced birders. Yes, I should explain: we are birders, not birdwatchers. This is because we don't necessarily *watch* birds; we just "bird". But don't be shy. Even I was ignorant once. Still, the way birdwatching is done may be a little confusing to you at first. So let me walk you through the experience, and explain a little of the theory behind the thing as we go.

Soon after you leave the car park and head along the trail, you'll likely notice something odd. The experienced birders in the group pay no attention whatsoever to the obvious birds that you see around you. Crows, herons, and blackbirds fly constantly by, but no-one says a word. The hike rambles on in silence. What's going on?

Well, it's a funny thing, but these are not actually real birds. Herons, for instance: everyone knows what a heron is, even non-birdwatchers. Herons go without saying. Then there's crows and blackbirds. They are more a kind of pest, not a kind of wildlife, if you see what I mean. It may be slowly dawning on you by now that *none* of the birds you have come to know and admire in your garden are proper birds at all. They're ... garden birds. (Later, you will discover that garden birds become real for just one day of the year. But you have never been on a Christmas Bird Count, so you don't know about that yet.)

Chickadees aren't quite pests, but they are, well, too obvious. Their calls are loud and foolish, and they are suspiciously tame around people. You should think of them as a kind of background diversion, to make real birds harder to spot. Suppose you are searching for a bird among the leafy branches. If you can't see it, it might be anything. If you can see it,

it's bound to be a chickadee.

Now, the rules of etiquette forbid birders from identifying common birds out loud. That would amount to an insult to the listener. So by remaining silent, your companions are merely showing respect.

Real birds will be announced from time to time during the walk. They have names like 'Yellow-throated!', 'Wilson's!', and 'Least!' You will not find these names in your field guide, and you may indeed notice that no-one else has brought a field guide, but whenever one is called, the experienced birders all point their binoculars in a certain direction and murmur, like members of a devout sect on a wilderness pilgrimage.

By now, you realize that bird identification is more complicated than you had thought. You refrain from pointing out anything or asking for help, because you don't know if what you're looking at is even a real bird at all. So you take your cue from the experienced leader who has

Quiz for Birders

Peter Rice has forwarded a puzzling piece he picked up in Greenland. If the editor doesn't get too many complaints for being punny, you'll find a few from time to time in the *"Small Forest" Duck*. Answers are on page 121 Further contributions are welcomed.

What bird is?

1. An outfielder
2. Where gardeners plant extra seeds
3. What thieves are doing
4. A coward from the great plains
5. A regal angler
6. A corner
7. A sad letter
8. A short conversation

stopped and is peering through binoculars w-a-y into the distance. You peer, and gradually a speck becomes visible in the sky, moving towards you. If only you could keep those binoculars steady ... As you struggle, the leader lowers his glasses and continues down the trail without saying anything. But you persevere and watch as the steadily-approaching bird passes overhead. It would seem to be a crow.

How can we explain what just happened? Why did the leader stare at the crow? Well, strange as it may sound, non-birds such as crows become real at a distance. And the farther away they are, the more extraordinary they become. Scientists in the field of quantum ornithology recognize this phenomenon as Goshawk's Law of Birding. The theoretical background is complex, but this is the gist of it:

As crows recede into the distance they become indistinguishable from say, Peregrines. Similarly, Peregrines might as well be Kirtland's Warblers provided they are sufficiently far away. Technically, they are said to acquire "rarity potential". If you think about it, this makes obvious sense, since rare birds are spread out more thinly, and so on average are further away from you. (This truth is familiar to all mothers. When their children get too close, they say 'Make yourself scarce'.)

At extreme distances, there is simply no scientific way to distinguish bird X from, say, an Eskimo Curlew, and we are bound to include it in the 'provisional set' of Eskimo Curlews. Some quantum ornithologists extend the argument further, and claim -- the speed of light being what it is, and so on -- that if the distance is great enough, even extinct birds such as Great Auks should be glimpsed in flight by experienced observers.

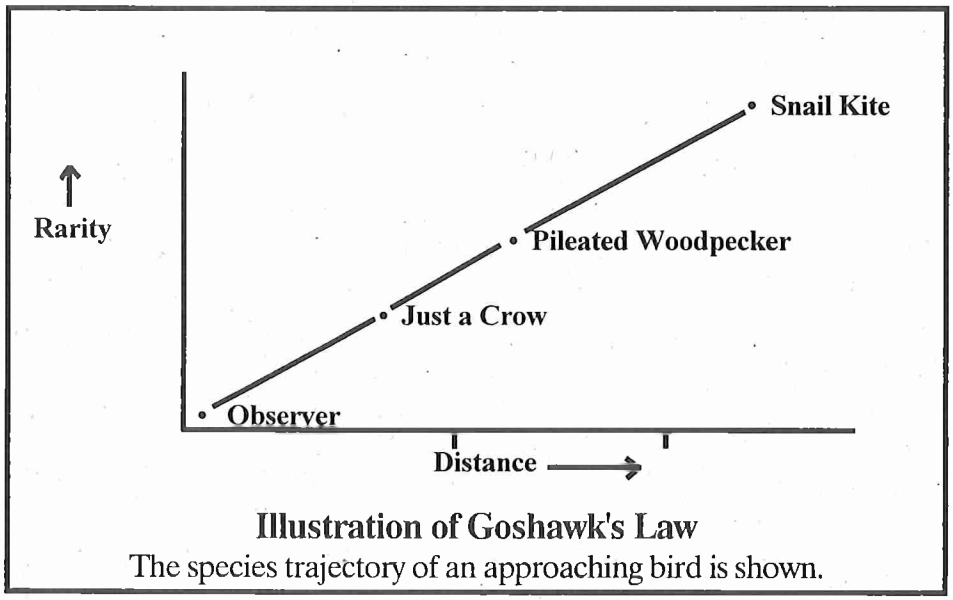


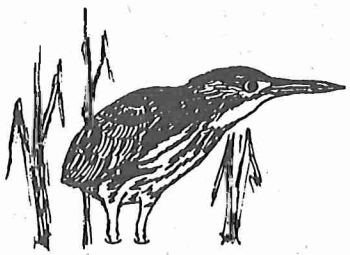
Illustration of Goshawk's Law
The species trajectory of an approaching bird is shown.

Our field-trip leader stopped watching the distant bird because, in flying closer, it had become common. Now you will see the wisdom in keeping silent and *not* labelling this bird as any particular species. That would have been merely confusing, since the bird's identity was not fixed but changing (see illustration). It had, in fact, as it came *very* close, become a non-bird.

We'll return to the hike, where our leader pauses again, and thoughtfully cocks his head. He seems to be listening to a very small noise. Goshawk's Law applies equally well to sounds, and also to bad viewing conditions, thick vegetation, and so on. A bird that can hardly be seen has high rarity potential; there is no scientific basis for not identifying it as something terrifically rare. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" is simply not true in quantum ornithology: any bird in your hand is *bound* to be a chickadee.

Quantum ornithology finds its purest application in the advanced discipline of 'seawatching' (which most of the time, by the way, is exactly that). Seawatchers look for birds from the shores of seas and other large bodies of water. They identify birds far, far away, sometimes even in different countries. Furthermore, since pelagic seabirds fly closer to the shore in severe storms, seawatchers favour foul days and high seas. Under poor viewing conditions, sometimes called 'extreme birding', the rarity potential of any bird will be huge, and anything is possible.

So when you're on your first trip, and you can't see what the others are seeing, and you don't know what's going on, don't despair. That mystery, you see, is the essence and the sport of it.



Noteworthy Bird Records

by Rob Dobos

Total species recorded in HSA during 1997 to October 31: 277. Underlined species or dates require documentation by the Hamilton Bird Records Committee. Capitalized species require documentation by the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Observers: Alf Adamo (AA), Barb Charlton (BC), Ted Cole (TC), Hugh Currie (HC), Rob Dobos (RD), Sandra Eadie (SE), Gavin Edmondstone (GE), Marcel Gahbauer (MG), Denys Gardiner (DG), Kathleen Gardiner (KG), Jerry Guenther (JGr), Jerry Guild (JGu), Carl Hamann (CH), John Hannah (JHh), Bob Henry (BHe), Mark Jennings (MJ), Bill Lamond (BL), Dennis Lewington (DL), Gwen Lewington (GL), Stuart Mackenzie (SM), Kevin McLaughlin (KM), Matt Mills (MM), Dave Milsom (DMi), John Olmsted (JO), Rose Petersen (RP), Bill Read (BR), Carl Rothfels (CR), Ian Smith (IS), Bob Stamp (RSt), Mike Street (MS), William Wilson (WW), Brian Wylie (BW), Many Observers (m.obs.).

Legend:

* -first occurrence for the year

F -first occurrence for the migration

L -last occurrence for the migration

HSA -Hamilton Study Area

max. -maximum # reported

Plumages,etc.:

m. -male

f. -female

ad. -adult

imm. -immature

juv. -juvenile

1st win. -first winter

1st yr. -first year

Counties/Regions:

Brant [*BR*]
Haldimand-Norfolk [*HN*]
Halton [*HL*]
Hamilton-Wentworth [*HW*]
Niagara [*NG*]
Peel [*PL*]
Waterloo [*WT*]
Wellington [*WL*]

OCTOBER 1997

Red-throated Loon: About 30 off Van Wagners Beach [*HW*] Oct 25 F (RP,IS), and one there Oct 30 (RD).

Common Loon: Birds off Van Wagners Beach: 10 -Oct 11 (RD,BC,KM), 15 -Oct 19 (RD *et al.*), 10 -Oct 21 (RD), 25 -Oct 25 (RD *et al.*), 10 -Oct 30 (RD).

Pied-billed Grebe: One at Valley Inn [*HL*] Oct 5 (KM); four at Valens C.A. [*HW*] Oct 5 (RD,BC); one at Hendrie Valley [*HL*] Oct 22 (MJ).

Horned Grebe: 12 off Van Wagners Beach Oct 12 (KM); two at Dundas Marsh [*HW*] Oct 25 (MG); six off N Shore of Hamilton Harbour [*HW*] Oct 28 (RD).

Red-necked Grebe: The nesting pair and two juv. remained at Bronte Harbour [*HL*] Oct 1-7, with only two ad. there Oct 13-31 (GE;m.obs.); a max. of 60 off Shoreacres [*HL*] Oct 12 (KM); one off N Shore of Harbour Oct 28 (RD).

American Bittern: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 1 (DL,GL,CH); one at Dundas Hydro Pond [*HW*] Oct 4 L (BW).

Great Egret: One at Hwy 8, Sheffield [*HW*] Aug 29 (BL); two at Dundas Marsh and Dundas Hydro Pond Oct 1-31 (m.obs.); one at Christie C.A. [*HW*] Oct 6 (BW).

Green Heron: One at Middletown Marsh [*HW*] Oct 6-8 (RD); one at Van Wagners Ponds [*HW*] Oct 19 L (RD *et al.*).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Five juv. at Dundas Hydro Pond Oct 4 (BW); five juv. at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*).

Tundra Swan: 15 at Dundas Marsh Oct 29 F (WW,JGr).

Snow Goose: One over Brantford [*BR*] Oct 11 (BL); four blue morph off Van Wagners Beach Oct 26 (RD,WW).

Brant: One at Bronte Harbour Oct 12F-31 (GE;m.obs.); four off Fifty Point C.A. [*HW/NG*] Oct 25 (DMi *et al.*); eight off Van Wagners Beach Oct 26 (KM,BL).

Wood Duck: Up to 20 at Middletown Marsh Oct 1-31 (RD,BC); 80 at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (BW,BHe); three m. at Burlington Beach Canal [*HL*] Oct 7 (RD); 30 at Hendrie Valley Oct 22 (MJ).

Green-winged Teal: 14 past Van Wagners Beach Oct 11 (RD,BC,KM); 15 at Conc 5 E of Middletown Rd [*HW*] Oct 18 (RD,BC); 225 at Dundas Marsh Oct 19 (MM).

Northern Pintail: 17 past Van Wagners Beach Oct 7 (RD).

Blue-winged Teal: Two at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (BW,BHe).

Northern Shoveler: 128 at Tollgate Ponds [*HW*] Oct 7 (RD).

Gadwall: 120 at Tollgate Ponds Oct 7 (RD).

American Wigeon: Three at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*); five on Harbour off LaSalle Marina [*HW*] Oct 23 (MJ).

Canvasback: Eight at Tollgate Ponds Oct 19 F (RD *et al.*).

Redhead: 45 at Tollgate Ponds Oct 7 (RD); 18 off LaSalle Marina Oct 23 (MJ).

Ring-necked Duck: Six at Tollgate Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*); 10 off LaSalle Marina Oct 23 (MJ).

Greater Scaup: Birds at NE Shore of Harbour [*HW*]: 100 -Oct 1, 110 -Oct 2, 150 -Oct 3 (RD); 1000 off Confederation Park [*HW*] Oct 21 (RD).

Oldsquaw: Five off Venture Inn [*HL*] and 20 off NE Shore of Harbour Oct 27 (RD).

Black Scoter: Birds off Van Wagners Beach: 2 -Oct 12 F (KM), 2 -Oct 25 (RD,BC), 1m.,2f. -Oct 26 (BW,DG).

"Dark-winged" scoter species: 10 off Van Wagners Beach Oct 11 F (RD,BC,KM), and one there Oct 21 (RD).

Surf Scoter: One m. off Venture Inn Oct 27 F (RD); one at Grimsby Sewage Ponds [*NG*] Oct 28 (MM,SM).

White-winged Scoter: One m. remained off Van Wagners Beach Oct 1-17 (RD), and 25 there Oct 11 (RD,BC,KM); one f. at Tollgate Ponds Oct 12 (KM); 110 off Bronte [*HL*] Oct 24 (MJ).

Common Goldeneye: 20 off Van Wagners Beach Oct 25 F (RD,BC).

Bufflehead: 12 off Burloak Park [*HL*] Oct 16 (MJ).

Hooded Merganser: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 13 (KM).

Common Merganser: Two off Bronte Oct 13 (GE).

Red-breasted Meragnser: Two off Shoreacres Oct 8 F (RD).

Ruddy Duck: A max. of 145 at Tollgate Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*).

Turkey Vulture: 106 over St. Augustines Cemetery, Dundas [*HW*] Oct 1 (MM).

Osprey: One at Woodland Cemetery [*HW*] Oct 10 (RD,AA); one at Christie C.A. Oct 29 (MM,JHh); one at Middletown Marsh Oct 15 (RD).

Bald Eagle: One imm. at Dundas Marsh Oct 3 (MM,JHh); one juv.,one 1st yr. at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (KM *et al.*); one imm. over QEW & Bronte Rd [*HL*] Oct 25 (RD,BC).

Northern Harrier: 13 over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 (MM).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 58 over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 (MM), and 23 there Oct 16 (MM,RSt).

Cooper's Hawk: Eight over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 (MM).

Northern Goshawk: Three over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 and one there Oct 16 (MM); one at Middletown Marsh Oct 15 (RD); one at Valley Inn Oct 24 (RD).

Broad-winged Hawk: Birds over Brantford: 1 -Aug 10 F, 340 -Sep 14, 192 -Sep 20 (BL).

Rough-legged Hawk: One at Conc 5 E of Brock Rd [*HW*] Oct 24 F (RD).

Golden Eagle: One juv. at Dundas Marsh Oct 4F-5 (JGu *et al.*;BW); two ad. at High Level Bridge[*HW*] Oct 21 (JO); one over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 27 (MM); three over Lake off Grimsby Sewage Ponds Oct 28 (MM,SM).

American Kestrel: 20 over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 (MM).

Merlin: One at Brantford Aug 17 F and two there Sep 15 (BL); one over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 (MM); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 4 (JGu *et al.*); one at Bronte Oct 6 (MJ); one at Bronte Harbour Oct 7 (MJ); one wintering at Thorpe St, Dundas [*HW*] Oct 9 (BW); one at NE Shore of Harbour Oct 19 (RD *et al.*); one at High Level Bridge Oct 21 (JO); one at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 28 (SM); one at Valley Inn Oct 28 (MM,SM).

Peregrine Falcon: One over Brantford Sep 20 (BL), and one there Sep 23 (BL,KG); one over St. Augustines Cemetery Oct 1 and two there Oct 16 (MM); one at Bronte Oct 1 (MJ); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 4 (JGu *et al.*) and Oct 5 (chasing a BCNH) (BW,BHe); one juv. at LaSalle Park [*HL*] Oct 25 (MM).

Ring-necked Pheasant: One f. at QEW & Hwy 2 [*HL*] Oct 18 (RD,BC).

Sora: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 9 (BW); one juv. at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 19-25L (KM *et al.*).

Common Moorhen: One at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 19 L (RD *et al.*).

American Coot: Five at Valens C.A. Oct 5 (RD,BC); nine at Bronte Harbour Oct 8 (MJ); 80 off LaSalle Marina Oct 6 (RD), and 85 there Oct 23 (MJ); three at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*).

Black-bellied Plover: Birds at Dundas Marsh: 4 -Oct 5 (MM,CR), 4 -Oct 13 (KM), 5 -Oct 19 (MM,CR); one at Windermere Basin Oct 23 (RD); one at Tollgate Ponds Oct 25 (KM).

American Golden-Plover: 15 over Brantford Aug 30 (BL); one juv. at Windermere Basin Oct 11 (KM); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 19-25 L (MM,CR;WW,JGr).

Semipalmated Plover: Two at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (MM,CR); two at Windermere Basin Oct 12 L (KM).

Killdeer: 50 at Dundas Marsh Oct 19 (MM,CR).

Greater Yellowlegs: Five at Tollgate Ponds Oct 7 (RD); eight at Dundas Marsh Oct 9 (BW).

Lesser Yellowlegs: 32 at Valley Inn Oct 14 (RD); 24 at Dundas Marsh Oct 19 (MM,CR).

Hudsonian Godwit: One ad. at Dundas Marsh Oct 1-31 (MM;m.obs.); one ad. with an injured leg at Windermere Basin Oct 22-31 (DL,GL,CH;m.obs.).

Sanderling: Two at Tollgate Ponds Oct 19 (RD *et al.*), and three there Oct 26 (KM,BL).

White-rumped Sandpiper: One at Valley Inn Oct 14 (RD); five at Dundas Marsh Oct 25-29 (WW,JGr); one at LaSalle Marina Oct 28 (RD).

Pectoral Sandpiper: 10 at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (MM,CR); 35 at Valley Inn Oct 14 (AA); 10 at Christie C.A. Oct 29 (MM,JHh).

Purple Sandpiper: One juv. at Dundas Marsh Oct 31 * (CR).

Dunlin: 22 at Valley Inn Oct 14 (RD); 45 at Dundas Marsh Oct 19 (MM,CR); 30 at Windermere Basin Oct 23 (RD); 20 at Christie C.A. Oct 29 (MM,JHh); four at Binbrook C.A. [*HW*] Oct 30 (DL,GL).

Stilt Sandpiper: One at Hwy 6 N of Hagersville [*HN*] Oct 5 L (DL,GL).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Five juv. at Dundas Marsh Oct 13 (KM), and three there Oct 19 (MM,CR); four at Valley Inn Oct 14 (AA); one at Green Lane, Paris [*BR*] Oct 28-31 (BL).

Common Snipe: One at Valley Inn Oct 14-24 (RD,AA;KM).

Red Phalarope: One at Van Wagners Beach Oct 26-31 (m.obs.).

Pomarine Jaeger: One ad. at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 12 * (*fide* HC).

Parasitic Jaeger: One ad. light morph, one intermediate morph off Van Wagners Beach Oct 11 (RD,BC,KM); two off Fifty Point C.A. Oct 12 (*fide* HC).

Jaeger species: Birds off Van Wagners Beach: 3 -Oct 11 (RD,BC,KM), 1 dark morph juv. -Oct 16 (RD,DG), 1 -Oct 26 (BW).

Bonaparte's Gull: Nine off Shoreacres Oct 12 (KM); eight off Confederation Park Oct 21 (RD); 38 at Fifty Point C.A. Oct 27 (RD).

Black-legged Kittiwake: One juv. off Van Wagners Beach Oct 25 (DMi *et al.*).

Caspian Tern: Two at Grand River, Brantford Jul 25 (BL); two juv. at NE Shore of Harbour Oct 2 (RD); two at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 L (KM;MM,CR).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: One at 1 km S of Glen Morris [*BR*] Aug 9 L (BL).

Short-eared Owl: One at Windermere Basin Oct 25 F (*fide* RD); four off Van Wagners Beach Oct 30 (RD).

Common Nighthawk: One over Brantford Aug 10 F (BL), and one there Oct 6 L (BL).

Chimney Swift: 150 over Brantford Aug 10 (BL).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 31 (CR).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Five at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 2 (RD); one at Bronte Harbour Oct 15 L (MJ).

Pileated Woodpecker: One at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 (RD,BC); one at Spencer Gorge Wilderness Area [*HW*] Oct 11 (BW).

Eastern Phoebe: Five at Bronte Oct 1 (MJ); one at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 25 (KM).

Great Crested Flycatcher: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 4 L (JGu *et al.*).

Eastern Kingbird: One at Branchton [*WT*] Sep 16 L (BL,KG).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: 20 at Grand Rvier, Brantford Sep 24 L (BL).

Barn Swallow: One at PetroCanada Pier [*HL*] Oct 24 L (MJ).

Blue Jay: 410 at Bronte Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE).

Tufted Titmouse: One at Larchwood Green, Burlington [*HL*] Oct 16 (TC); two at RBG Arboretum [*HW*] Oct 19-on (SE;m.obs.); one at Grimsby Sewage Ponds Oct 28 (MM,SM).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Eight at Bronte Oct 10 (MJ); six at S Shore Cootes Paradise Oct 19 (MM,CR).

Carolina Wren: Two at Spencer Creek Woods [*HW*] Oct 1-31 (MM); one at Shoreacres Oct 8 (RD); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 11 (MS); one at Sedgewick Forest Park, Oakville [*HL*] Oct 21 (MJ); two S of High Level Bridge Oct 23 (MJ).

House Wren: One at Bronte Oct 10 L (MJ).

Winter Wren: 15 at Shoreacres Oct 8 (RD); 45 at Bronte Oct 10 (MJ).

Marsh Wren: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 4-9 (JGu *et al.*;BW).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 10 at Burlington Beach Canal Oct 7 (RD).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 20 at Burlington Beach Canal Oct 7 (RD); 40 at Bronte Oct 10 (MJ).

Eastern Bluebird: Five at Burloak Woods [*HL*] Oct 15 (MJ); 20 at Shell Park [*HL*] Oct 19 (MJ); eight at Middletown Marsh Oct 24 (RD).

Veery: One at Puslinch Bog [*WL*] Sep 18 L (BL).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Two at Bronte Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 9 L (BW).

Swainson's Thrush: One at Burloak Woods Oct 15 L (MJ).

Hermit Thrush: 34 at Bronte Oct 15 (MJ), and 24 there Oct 24 (MJ).

Gray Catbird: One at RBG Rose Garden Oct 23 (AA).

Northern Mockingbird: Two at Binbrook C.A. Oct 30 (DL,GL).

Brown Thrasher: One at Burlington Beach Canal Oct 1 L (RD).

American Pipit: Five at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 (RD); one at Bronte Harbour Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE); one at Van Wagners Beach Oct 19 (RD *et al.*); 200 near Branchton [*WT*] Oct 28 (BR); two at Dundas Marsh Oct 29 (WW,JGr).

Cedar Waxwing: 400 at High Level Bridge Oct 23 (MJ); 220 at Valley Inn Oct 28 (MM,SM).

Northern Shrike: Two ad. at Shell Park Oct 24 F (MJ).

Blue-headed Vireo: Two at Bronte Oct 1 (MJ); one at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 (RD,BC); one at LaSalle Park Oct 6 (RD).

Red-eyed Vireo: One at Northview Cres, Burlington [*HL*] Oct 3 L (MJ).

Tennessee Warbler: One at Valley Inn Oct 3 (RD); two at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 (RD,BC); one at Northview Cres, Burlington Oct 7 L (MJ).

Orange-crowned Warbler: One at Burloak Woods Oct 1 and seven there Oct 6 (MJ); one at Valley Inn Oct 3 (RD); two at Dundas Marsh Oct 5 (BW,BHe); four at LaSalle Park Oct 6 (RD); one at Hopkins Tract [*HW*] Oct 13 (MM).

Nashville Warbler: Three at Valley Inn Oct 3 (RD); four at Burloak Woods Oct 10 (MJ).

Northern Parula: One f. at Burloak Woods Oct 10 L (MJ).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: One at Burloak Woods Oct 1 (MJ); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 9 L (BW).

Magnolia Warbler: Two at Burloak Woods Oct 10 (MJ).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Two f. at Shell Park Oct 10 (MJ).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 20 at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 2 (RD); 70 at Dundas Marsh Oct 9 (BW) and Oct 19 (MM,CR); 55 at Coronation Park, Oakville [*HL*] Oct 21 (MJ).

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER: One m. at RBG Rose Garden [*HL*] Oct 22*-23 (MJ;m.obs.), provided the third record for the HSA.

Black-throated Green Warbler: One at LaSalle Park Oct 6 L (RD).

Pine Warbler: One at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 (RD,BC); one at Brantford Oct 7 L (BL,DG).

Palm Warbler: Five at Burloak Woods Oct 1 (MJ); one at Woodland Cemetery Oct 10 (RD,AA).

Black-and-white Warbler: One m. at Burloak Woods Oct 6 L (MJ).

American Redstart: One at LaSalle Park Oct 6 L (RD).

Ovenbird: One at Northview Cres, Burlington Oct 3 L (MJ).

Mourning Warbler: One at Burloak Woods Oct 19 L (MJ).

Common Yellowthroat: One at Hendrie Valley Oct 22 (MJ).

Wilson's Warbler: One f. at Burloak Woods Oct 6 L (MJ).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 4 L (JGu *et al.*).

Indigo Bunting: One at LaSalle Park Oct 6 L (RD).

Eastern Towhee: One at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 F (RD,BC); one m. at Shoreacres Oct 8 (RD); one at Grimsby Sewage Ponds Oct 13 (KM); one f. at Shell Park Oct 19 (MJ).

American Tree Sparrow: One at Shell Park Oct 21 F (MJ); 12 at Middletown Marsh Oct 23 (RD).

Chipping Sparrow: Three at Middletown Marsh Oct 6 (RD); one imm. at Ramsgate Dr, Stoney Creek [*HW*] Oct 25 (DL,GL).

Field Sparrow: Six at Middletown Marsh Oct 4 F (RD,BC), and two there Oct 22 (RD); one at Shoreacres Oct 8 (RD); one at Dundas Marsh Oct 11 (MS); two at RBG Rose Garden Oct 25 (KM).

Savannah Sparrow: One at Shell Park Oct 10 (MJ).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Birds at Dundas Marsh: 3 -Oct 1 (DL,GL,CH), 2 -Oct 4 (JGu *et al.*), 1 -Oct 11 (MS), 1 -Oct 19 L (MM,CR).

Fox Sparrow: One at Dundas Marsh Oct 4 F (JGu *et al.*); five at Burloak Woods Oct 15 (MJ); 17 at Hendrie Valley Oct 22 (MJ).

Lincoln's Sparrow: One at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 2 (RD); one at Shell Park Oct 24 (MJ).

Swamp Sparrow: One at Bronte Oct 1 F and 13 there Oct 23 (MJ); 20 at Middletown Marsh Oct 1 (RD).

White-throated Sparrow: 30 at Burlington Beach Canal Oct 1 (RD); 40 at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 2 (RD); 25 at LaSalle Park Oct 6 (RD); 30 at Valley Inn Oct 24 (RD).

White-crowned Sparrow: 16 at Bronte Oct 1 and 72 there Oct 6 (MJ); nine at Middletown Marsh Oct 3 and one ad. *gambelii* there Oct 15 (RD).

Dark-eyed Junco: 40 at CCIW [*HL*] Oct 1 (RD); 50 at Van Wagners Ponds Oct 2 (RD); 40 at RBG Rose Garden Oct 22 (RD *et al.*).

Lapland Longspur: One at Van Wagners Beach Oct 30 F (RD).

Snow Bunting: Two at PetroCanada Pier Oct 24 F (MJ); two at Kirkwall Rd N of Safari Rd [*HW*] Oct 27 (BC); nine at Van Wagners Beach and two at Middletown Marsh Oct 30 (RD).

Red-winged Blackbird: 1300 at Bronte Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE).

Eastern Meadowlark: Two at Hopkins Tract [*HW*] Oct 13 (MM); two at Conc 5 E of Brock Rd Oct 14 (RD); two at Binbrook C.A. Oct 30 (DL,GL).

Rusty Blackbird: 20 at Middletown Marsh Oct 1 and 50 there Oct 31 (RD,BC); 20 at Bronte Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE); four at Shoreacres Oct 8 (RD); 62 at Dundas Marsh Oct 19 (MM,CR).

Purple Finch: One m. at Bronte Oct 1 (MJ); up to 15 at Middletown Marsh Oct 1-16 (RD,BC); one at RBG Arboretum Oct 24 (RD).

White-winged Crossbill: One over Brantford Oct 6 * (BL); one at Woodland Cemetery Oct 26 (BL,KM).

Common Redpoll: Three at Grimsby Sewage Ponds Oct 28 F (MM,SM); one at Middletown Marsh Oct 30-31 (RD).

Pine Siskin: Five at Bronte Oct 5 * (MJ,MM,GE); two at Middletown Marsh Oct 28 and five there Oct 31 (RD); one at Ramsgate Dr, Stoney Creek Oct 31 (DL).

Evening Grosbeak: Three at Bronte Oct 5 (MJ,MM,GE), and one there Oct 24 (MJ); one m. at Middletown Marsh Oct 11 and 20 there Oct 26-30 (RD,BC).

Please send your bird records for November and December 1997 before February 8 to: Rob Dobos, 1156 5th. Conc. Rd. W., R.R.#2, Waterdown, Ontario, L0R 2H2; phone: (905) 659-7732; e-mail: rob.dobos@ec.gc.ca

Answers to Quiz on page 114:

1. Flycatcher
2. Sparrow
3. Robin
4. Prairie Chicken
5. Kingfisher
6. Tern
7. Blue Jay
8. Chat

Sand Dunes: Shock absorbers of the shoreline

by Nadine Litwin

Sand dunes are probably the single most endangered ecosystem in the Great Lakes Basin. They have been quarried for their sand, "developed", and "maintained" by meticulous grading and raking. These activities have not only altered the appearance of dunes, but, more importantly, have disrupted their function as natural shock absorbers of the shoreline. We can help to restore some of these natural shoreline processes with vegetation, but first we must understand what sand dunes are and how they work.

Sand dunes are mounds of sand with characteristic dune vegetation. They may be formed by an erosion-accretion process in which material is eroded away from bluffs, moved along shore by littoral drift, and deposited at obstacles or points along the shoreline that extend into the water. A dramatic example is Long Point in Lake Erie.

Dunes may also be the result of post-glacial lake deposits. In this case, the special climate and geomorphic conditions responsible for their formation are no longer present. There is no new supply of sand material. Such dunes are called relict dunes. Relict dunes may be found in Southampton, along the north-eastern shore of Lake Huron.

Dunes are the result of the dynamic interaction between wind, wave and sand. The predominant disturbance regime is storm-driven wave action which constantly shifts the sand. Storm events are particularly significant during periods of high lake levels. Storm-driven waves claim the foredune, and move the sand to the nearshore where it settles in sandbars. In calmer weather the waves carry the sand back to the beach where it dries out. Wind then picks up the sand and carries it back to the dunes.

This movement of sand is referred to as cross shore transport. Cross shore transport will adjust the profile of the beach but it is not the same as erosion. It is the ability to store sand, relinquish it to the sandbars, then store it again when the lake moves it back that makes dunes such effective shore-protection systems. Loss of sand becomes particularly critical where it overlays erodible, non-recoverable materials such as clay. When this material is lost, the shoreline recedes.

Dune restoration generally means keeping the sand from leaving the shoreline area, and rebuilding the dunes. Wind at certain speeds can directly move sand particles of certain sizes, but the moving particles move each other, too, much like one billiard ball can knock another into motion. While these bouncing grains fill the air near the surface, larger sand particles are rolled along the surface by the wind. An obstruction disrupts the air flow, and immediately in front of and behind the obstruction the sand stops moving and starts to pile up.

The most effective obstruction is dune vegetation. Dune vegetation is permanent, and is adapted to the special characteristics of a sand dune which include not only burial by the shifting sands, but lack of moisture, few nutrients, intense light, strong winds, and extreme temperatures.

Dune plants exhibit different growth responses which are triggered by, and help the plants to cope with, varying depths of sand burial. Some species such as sand reed grass (*Calamovilfa longifolia*) are able to withstand burial depths of up to 60 cm, while American beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) has been known to survive burial depths of up to 100 cm. However, in areas of consistently high sand accumulations, shrubs such as sand cherry (*Prunus pumilis*) and *Populus* species do better because of their vertical power of stem elongation, and because of their ability to form roots on buried stems.

American beachgrass is considered an excellent sand binder because of its extensive system of rhizomes. The most active periods of rhizome growth are in the spring and fall when growth can be measured in metres.

Interestingly, spring and fall are also the storm periods, and American beachgrass has an intriguing dispersal mechanism. Anwar Maun and his researchers at the University of Western Ontario have described an advancing front of rhizomes that move into the area within reach of storm waves. This results in what they call a bud bank of dormant buds because on undamaged rhizomes a large percentage of buds remains dormant. The release of the buds from dormancy seems to be linked with wave action. Wave action fragments the rhizomes, and the smaller the fragment, the greater the percentage of active buds. These colonizing units are then dispersed by wave action, and serve as sources of new plants along the shoreline.

Other plant species have other interesting strategies. Some maintain seed banks. Shifting sands may bury seeds so deeply that germination is inhibited. But

shifting may uncover those same seeds at which point the seed bank becomes active again.

Different species maintain viable seeds at varying depths, and for varying lengths of time. Seeds of common evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) have been found to be viable for up to 80 years, which may explain why so many of these plants are coming up along Burlington Beach while the cottages are coming down. Other plants like sea rocket (*Cakile edentula*) hedge their bets, and produce two sizes of seeds on a single plant which then remain viable at different burial depths.

Some plants such as wild trailing bean (*Strophostyles helvola*) use wave action to produce a seed rain. A few large plants along the mid-beach produce many seeds, which are propelled by fall storm waves up to the driftline, where one may find a high density of seedlings in the spring. It seems no matter what the strategy, there is an exquisitely tight fit between the species and its environment.

When dunes are degraded or destroyed by human activities, developments behind the dunes become susceptible to flooding, erosion and sand migration.

We need to restore our dunes and beaches. Restoring the shorelines of our sweetwater seas is not beyond our reach. But we stand a far greater chance of success when we step back to see what has already worked in the past. Plant species that have adapted to the difficult conditions of a sand dune have in essence already done the work for us. We just need to pay attention, and then use their help.

Camping in the Galapagos

by Glenn Barrett

During the few years I have been a Hamilton Naturalists' Club member I have read with enjoyment a number of articles that have appeared in *The Wood Duck* describing camping adventures enjoyed by other Club members. I have decided that it is time I shared a story of my own.

I have been an avid camper since I was a child but one of the most interesting camping trips I have been on occurred from November 1996 to April 1997 when I was camping in the Galapagos Islands. To be more exact, I was assisting with a research project studying Masked and Blue-footed Booby's, and my five co-workers and myself were camped on an uninhabited island in the Galapagos archipelago (Isla Espanola, the southeast most island in the chain). Below is a description of a few of the sights and sounds observable from my tent, which I included as part of a letter sent back home in December 1996.

"As I sit here writing postcards and letters, I thought I'd describe the Galapagos based on what I can see, and hear, from my tent. Not just any tent mind you – this is a four-person "Quest" tent protected from the hot equatorial sun overhead by a heavy duty tarp, and from the sand below by a heavy plastic sheet. Sun and sand – two of the four entities that define life here on Espanola (the third one being lava and the fourth being wildlife!). The interior of my tent over time *evolves* from being organized and tidy, to being a shambling disarray of clean and dirty clothes, camera equipment, books, and field gear. The one constant is the autumn leaves mobile spinning slowly in one corner; materials provided by my friend Chris prior to departure from Ontario. Oh yeah, the other constant would be my unmade bed – no one here to complain about it!

Back to the theme of this discussion; what is outside my tent? At the moment there are two male Lava Lizards doing some heavy duty head bobbing behaviour at each other while a female lizard pretends to be looking elsewhere. This courtship display is rudely interrupted as a plump Galapagos Dove wanders by and starts flicking sand and stones around looking for food. At the mere possibility of food, a Hood Mockingbird is instantly on the scene squawking away loudly, which definitely puts the brakes on any hopes the male Lava Lizards might have had about attracting the females attentions. Oh well, there's always tomorrow. *(Authors note: Hood is the other name for Isla Espanola, and the Hood Mockingbird is one of three species of birds endemic to this specific island; that is they are found nowhere else in the world!)*

Just behind my tent I hear the sounds made by the Waved Albatross parent as it returns to where it's chick has been bivouacking for the last week or more. "Chick" is probably the wrong word to use here as it is rapidly approaching adult dimensions (slightly taller than the size of a Wild Turkey, and with a much bigger wingspan), but it is still lacking the adult plumage and bright yellow bill.

Further behind my tent I can hear the tide crashing it's way back up the beach to the high tide line. Although I can't see the water from my tent's position, if I could I'd probably be seeing some Eagle

Rays and White-tipped Sharks in the shallows. Yesterday when I was sitting on the beach watching the water return, there were at least four of these Rays swimming around and the occasional white-tipped dorsal fin would break the surface indicating the sharks' presence. As the waves rolled in towards shore you could see the Rays inside the water column – very neat!

From my tent I can also hear that the male Galapagos Sea Lion is doing as he does everyday -barking as he swims back and forth along "his" beach daring anyone to try and steal females from his harem. One of the two females that had been asleep by the side of my tent belches, and lumbers away down to the beach.

Looking out my tent door I can see Great Frigatebirds soaring high up in the sky, ever on the lookout for fish, preferably one someone else has caught. The Swallow-tailed Gull that flies past doesn't have one, nor does the Red-billed Tropicbird which flies by noisily calling it's staccato call which reminds me of Terns back home in Ontario. A V-formation of Masked Booby's flies by heading back to the colony, no doubt bringing food back for their significant others who have been at the nest incubating eggs or shading their murderous (alright siblicidal) little offspring. *(Authors note: A lot of the research we were conducting involved looking at behaviour differences shown by the two species of Booby; specifically siblicidal behaviour whereby one sibling kills the other sibling).*

Looking at my tent door I can see one of Darwin's famous finches is perched there. To be exact it is a Large Cactus Finch who is looking like he might come in and inspect the maple leaves hanging in the corner. Alas the camp doorbell rings (our doorbell being the Blue-footed Booby's that are nesting on the pathway leading to the colony), which announces that someone is either returning, or leaving our camp. The finch hopes it is someone returning and leaves my tent to see what food it may be able to scavenge from the kitchen table.

And so ends a few minutes of observations from my tent here on Isla Espanola.''

Send in Your HSA Bird Life Lists

Once again, we will be updating the summary of local birders' bird species life list totals for the Hamilton Study Area (HSA) in an upcoming issue of the *Wood Duck*, to include any additions to the end of 1997. We encourage all long time birders, as well as newer ones that have made the threshold (see below), to send in their totals.

The criteria for reporting totals are as follows:

1. They must include live bird species positively identified by you, by sight or sound. (Since your list will not be checked, we rely on your honesty).

2. They must include birds encountered in the Hamilton Study Area (within a circle with a radius of 25 miles centred at Dundurn Castle, Hamilton.)

3. They must be species included on the official Hamilton Area Bird Checklist (1996 revision - see March 1996 *Wood Duck*, plus any new species recently accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee). No exotic escapees (e.g. Whooper Swan, Ringed Turtle Dove) or obviously introduced birds which are not locally established (e.g. not Trumpeter Swan or recently released Bobwhites; Wild Turkey is acceptable).

4. Include your totals up to December 31, 1997 only.

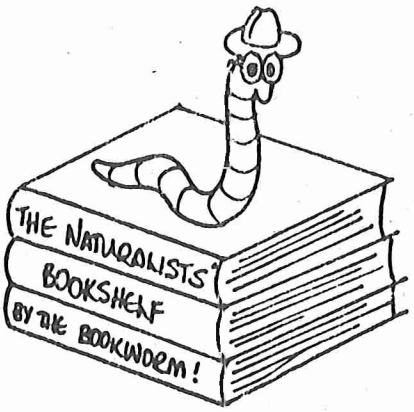
5. The Threshold for reporting will be 225 species (or roughly 60 % of the checklist total).

Send your Hamilton list totals, along with your name and address, by February 10 to:

Rob Dobos, 1156 5th. Conc. Rd. W., R.R.#2, Waterdown, Ont. L0R 2H2; phone (905) 659-7732, fax (905) 336-8901, e-mail: rob.dobos@ec.gc.ca

HNC Volunteers Required to Assist in the Valley

John Hannah, Club member and Program Facilitator for the newly formed Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is asking for volunteers to assist with nature programming at the new Watershed Interpretive Centre (WIC) at Elizabeth Bagshaw school in the Red Hill Valley. During a two week period from March 2 -13, John would like to request volunteers to supervise the Club display and to lead short hikes on the new Valley trail system. Hours of operation are 9A.M. to 2P.M. If you are interested in this opportunity to teach students about the Valley, please call John at 627-1453. Visitors will also be welcome at the WIC during this time period.



This month's column is a continuation of last month's tribute to Thorton W. Burgess.

Following on the success of his *Bedtime Stories* series, Burgess went on to write the equally-popular *Green Meadow* series (4 volumes 1918-20), the *Green Forest* series (4 volumes 1921-23) and many other single volumes throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. They were enjoyed by the young-at-heart of all ages, even presidents and princesses. They were translated into several languages. Peter Rabbit became Jaannot Lapin in France; Jimmy Skunk became Olle Skonk in Sweden. Most of them were illustrated by Harrison Cody who had already achieved wide recognition as an illustrator on the staff of *Life* magazine.

One of Burgess' greatest successes was the publication in 1919 of *The Burgess Bird Book for Children*. Through the inquisitiveness of Peter Rabbit, the reader is introduced to about one hundred of Peter's avian friends of eastern North America - Carol the Meadowlark, Boomer the Nighthawk, Dandy the Waxwings, Chicoree the Goldfinch, to name but a few. His descriptions and his rendering of the birds' songs and calls are still much more memorable to this writer than those found in today's field guides. Illustrated with thirty-two colour plates by the renowned bird artist, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the book became a best seller for some forty years and a much sought-after collector's item today.

But Burgess was not without his critics. When our family went to the Hamilton Public Library in the late 1940s to borrow some of his books, we were advised that in the opinion of the staff his books did not merit shelf space because "the animals in his books talk to one another and they wear clothes!" To such criticisms Burgess responded in his autobiography: "But it is generally recognized that animals do have some means of communication. As for the coats, skirts, aprons, hats and bonnets, these were merely personality badges and as such were acceptable as long as characteristics, habits and surroundings were kept in strict accord with known facts, the truth. That is why Reddy Fox never drives an automobile and Polly Chuck never sits in a rocking chair knitting." (p.303)

In the early 1920s when radio was very much in its infancy, Burgess was persuaded to share his stories with the local listening audience. He quickly came to realize that radio was "an instrument for education with undreamed of potentialities". In January 1924 he started the weekly Radio Nature League. Anyone who made "a simple but comprehensive conservation pledge" was enrolled as a member. Members were encouraged to share their experiences and observations of the natural world. Noted naturalists were invited to give talks. Participation in environmental causes was encouraged. Membership in the ten years that the programme was aired grew to over 50,000.

In the 1970s another generation was introduced to Burgess' stories through the medium of television. The series "Tales from the Green Forest" continued to teach young viewers about the natural world through the escapades of Peter Rabbit and his friends. As Peter himself was wont to say: "With open mind go on your way, and add to knowledge every day."

The recipient of many awards and honours, Burgess died in 1965 at the age of ninety-one, but some three decades later, more than sixty of his books are still in print.

February 9 Meeting

Robert McCaw will dazzle us with a selection of his slides taken during travels throughout North America documenting the wonders of nature. Part of his talk will include an audio-visual exploration of the life of the Common Loon. Join us at the RBG at 8 p.m.

Update on Lands for Life

In the December edition of the Wood Duck, we learned about the Lands for Life planning process developed to determine the allocation of nearly half of Ontario's public lands. The Wildlands League is planning a number of slide shows across southern Ontario over the next few months. Although there are no shows scheduled for Hamilton, Club members can attend presentations in London or Toronto. To view a list of the presentations on the Internet, have a look at http://web.idirect.com/~wildland/slide.htm.

The Value of Protecting Natural Areas Part V: Quality of Life Benefits

The following is a continuation of a series prepared by John Struger which presents information from ***Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors****, a resource book published by the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the U.S. National Parks Services (Department of the Interior, 4th edition, 1995). Other parts of the series were published in the March, November and December 1997 and January 1998 issues of the Wood Duck.*

In a US study, quality of life for employees was the third most important factor in locating a business, according to an annual survey of chief executive officers conducted in 1989. The two most important factors were access to domestic markets and availability of skilled labour. The top city for business was Atlanta, which also ranked first for highest quality of life. Seattle which ranks as the second best city for business, also received very high marks for quality of life. The Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress reports that a city's quality of life is more important than purely business-related factors when it comes to attracting new businesses, particularly in the rapidly growing high-tech and service industries.

One very important aspect of quality of life is location with convenient access to natural settings, recreational and cultural opportunities, and open space. Greenways, rivers, and trails can play an important role in increasing a community's quality of life, and are attractive to businesses and corporations. Office site locations adjacent to rivers, trails and greenways are also likely to be more attractive to prospective tenants than sites lacking such amenities. Developers and property managers recognize this.

The San Antonio Riverwalk is always used as an example of the high quality of life and livability of San Antonio, Texas. Site location teams for relocating businesses generally visit the River walk itself. The Riverwalk provided a retreat for employees during lunch and offers a valuable green space in the central business district. A location on the Riverwalk is considered very desirable.

Pueblo, Colorado, once known mainly as an industrial city, made an early decision in its highly successful economic revitalization effort. The decision was made to improve its appearance and amenities in order to attract new businesses. The resulting investment in trails and parks along the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek is now credited by city fathers as one of the most important components in turning around economic decline.

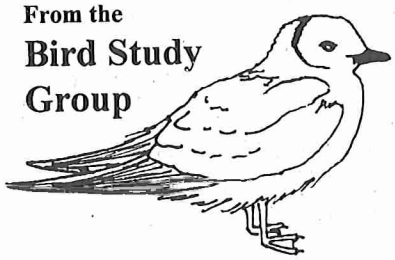
The American River Bike Trail in Sacramento, California, is included as an important outdoor recreation amenity in the Chamber of Commerce's publication All About Business in Sacramento. It is described as a 30 mile oasis in the heart of the city. The President of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Roy Brewer, considers the trail to be evidence of the high quality of life in Sacramento, as well as one of Sacramento's treasures. To quote the Chamber of Commerce, "At many locations along the bicycle trail you can wade into the river, cast a line, and not see a single sign of civilization. The river trails provide abundant salmon fishing and natural areas for hiking, horseback riding, or biking – a chance to get away from it all without having to leave the city"

Businesses are realizing the benefits of healthy employees, both in increased efficiency and decreased health insurance claims. Greenways help promote fitness by providing convenient opportunities for exercise, such as walking, jogging or exercise courses. Greenways and trails also reduce firms' employees' commuting costs because they provide opportunities to commute by foot or bicycle.

Touring Parks on TV

The Discovery Channel is currently broadcasting a series on Great Canadian Parks at 9 pm on Mondays. The series began at the end of December, so you've already missed Forillon, Ellesmere Island, Mt. Robson, Georgian Bay Islands, Herschel Island and Grasslands. On February 2, Goat Range Provincial Park in British Columbia is featured. Others still to come are Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park, Alberta (February 9); Jasper National Park (Feb. 16); BC's Cape Scott Provincial Park (Feb. 23); Hecla Provincial Park in Manitoba (March 2); Terra Nova (March 9); Garabaldi on March 16; and, finally Point Pelee on March 23. *The editor is largely illiterate when it comes to TV, so if you're aware of programming that may be of interest to Club members, please let him know by phone or email.*

From the
Bird Study Group



by Rose Petersen

By previous arrangement, Mark Peck from the Royal Ontario Museum came to pick up birds, which had been stored in members' freezers. Mark spoke to us on what the ROM does with these birds, most of which are road or window kills. There were 18 species this time, including a Northern Fulmar found dead at Van Wagner's after a storm on Dec. 11th. There were jaegers and Ruffed Grouse as well as several varieties of warblers and thrushes. Mark thanked Mike Street for organizing, and the members who participated in, this project.

The museum is grateful as they no longer collect birds and this is a way to increase their collection as well as to trade with other museums. They make study skins, take tissue and blood samples from which they are learning more about the systematics. Taxonomy is rapidly changing with increased knowledge. The ROM also, to a lesser extent, make mounts to use as demonstrations and exhibits.

The ROM's collection of 135,000 skins ranges back 150 years; this ranks in the top ten in the world. Their collection of 45,000 skeletons is the biggest in the world. Mark said that most of the work is done by volunteers and since there have been many staff cuts the volunteers are essential and are much appreciated.

Members were reminded that it is illegal to keep dead birds unless arrangements are made through someone who has the necessary permit. If you find a dead bird in reasonable condition (considering the circumstances), wrap it in a couple of layers of plastic bag, seal with tape to keep the air out, and put it in a well marked container in your freezer. Then leave a message with your name and phone number on the Birding Hotline. Arrangements will be made, although you may have to hold on to the specimen for a while.

The bird sightings, led by Dennis Lewington, turned up some late Vesper's and Chipping Sparrows. The big storm December 10th brought a Kittiwake and some jaegers. John Olmsted, (who found the dead Fulmar) couldn't understand why there were not more birders out in the 50 mile an hour winds and driving snow. When Kevin said that some people had to work John replied that people should take time off during a big storm in order to bird. The Barrow's Goldeneye and King Eider were still being seen among the huge mixed flocks of ducks off Gray's Road including all three scoters.

Our featured speaker was Glenn Coady from Toronto giving us an interesting slide show of his October 1990 trip to Utah. Most of the slides were majestically scenic rather than bird pictures. Glenn covered many of the State and National parks in Utah as well as one stop to Mesa Verde just across the Utah border in Colorado.

Glenn pointed out that Utah is underbirded and there are marvellous places to bird even very close to Salt Lake City. There are "sky islands" and a variety of habitats and wide vistas. He said he took two cameras with the idea of one of them being for birds the other for scenes but it turned out that he had wide angle lenses on both cameras.

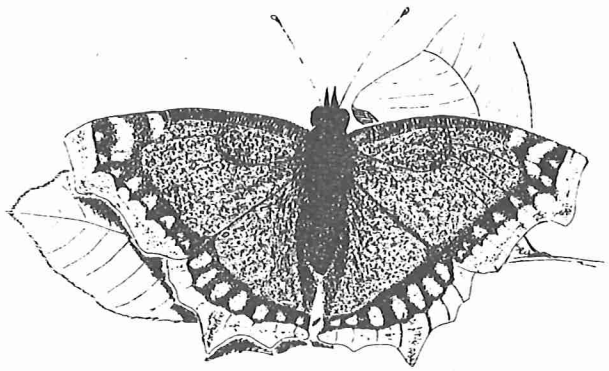
Glenn's favourite area was Arches Ntl. Park near Moab. This is in Southern Utah and the predominantly red rock is extremely colourful. In all of this area the sky is almost always bright blue and the light is exceptionally clear. Throughout the presentation he mentioned Canyon Wren and Rock Wren as being prolific in these areas. He also mentioned the many rattle snakes and lizards. Some places, like Gooseneck Preserve, had few species of birds but had exceptional geography to make it well worth going.

We saw slides from the eastern Uinta Mountains on the Wyoming border, to the little known birding haven, Lyttle's Ranch in the extreme south west corner of Utah. We saw slides from the famous Zion and Bryce Ntl. Parks and Monument Valley. We had a quick look at the Grand Canyon in Arizona which Glenn didn't get excited about, saying that after the wonders of the previous places he'd seen, it just didn't compare. Having been to all these places I agree with him completely.

One of the frustrating things for Glenn was that at least 60% of the sparrows went unidentified. The birds would flush up and then down among acres of dry scrubby terrain, never to be seen again. Glenn spoke about the release of captive bred California Condors in nearby Vermilion Cliffs. He says from what he could tell the areas around Utah were perfect for condors. He gave a URL for those interested in finding out more on released Condors: <http://www.peregrinefund.org/vermil.html>

Spotlight on the Mourning Cloak

by Laurel Sherwood



When Shakespeare wrote that butterflies "Show not their mealy wings but to the summer" (Troilus and Cressida III.iii.79), he forgot to account for Mourning Cloaks (or Camberwell Beauties, as they are called in England). Mourning Cloaks, along with many of their relatives, overwinter as adults, and on sunny winter days they may be seen flitting around in search of oozing tree sap. They contradict the Bard not only by showing their mealy wings to the winter, but also by occasionally choosing not to show their wings to the summer.

The Mourning Cloak is probably the longest-lived North American butterfly, emerging from its chrysalis in June or July and surviving until the following May or June. During the summer and fall, the butterfly feeds on tree sap, rotting fruit, and nectar to build up the fat reserves it needs to last through the winter. If the summer is hot and dry, the butterfly may estivate, suspending its activity and waiting for more favorable conditions before flying again. Fresh-looking individuals which appear in the fall have probably just emerged from estivation, and do not represent a new brood (the Mourning Cloak achieves its longevity by delaying sexual maturation and reproductive behaviors until spring). During the cold winter months, the Mourning Cloak hibernates, living off stored body fat and burning very few calories because of its slowed metabolic rate. It takes shelter from the cold by crawling behind a piece of loose bark or into any suitable crack or crevice.

The Mourning Cloak is also protected against the bite of winter by a built-in antifreeze. When temperatures drop in the fall, the composition of the butterfly's body fluid changes so that it becomes resistant to freezing. This adaptation to cold is not uncommon in the animal world - the hemolymph of many hibernating insects and the blood of some cold-water fishes have been found to contain substances such as glycerol, sorbitol, or alcohol which prevent freezing. The Mourning Cloak's hemolymph adjusts to the cold gradually, though, so an individual flying in the summertime could be killed if you were to place it in your freezer.

In the early spring, Mourning Cloaks take flight and mate. Females lay pale-colored eggs in clusters of 200 or more, encasing a twig of the host plant. Once they have hatched, the caterpillars spin a silk web around the young foliage and feed communally. They have the curious habit of twitching in unison when disturbed, which may serve to frighten would-be predators. Mourning Cloak caterpillars are black with tiny white flecks, branching black spines, and eight red spots on their backs.

Because they feed in large groups, Mourning Cloak caterpillars sometimes defoliate a whole branch of a host plant or tree. Hosts include willows, elms, poplars, aspens, cottonwoods, hackberries, birches, and nettles.Mourning Cloaks seem to prefer different hosts in different areas - even when those areas are not so far apart. For example, although both willow and elm trees occur throughout Texas, Mourning Cloaks reportedly prefer elm trees in East Texas and willow trees in West Texas.

After spending two to three weeks as a thorny chrysalis, an adult butterfly emerges, clothed in a rich purplish-brown velvet cloak bedecked with brilliant blue jewels and a creamy yellow trim. Its velvety appearance is due to hairs which serve to trap heat near the body. The wing bases are almost black, so that the butterfly absorbs light efficiently when it basks in the sun. These adaptations help the Mourning Cloak when it attempts to show its mealy wings to the winter.

So even if you live in the cold, white north, look sharp on warm, sunny days this winter and you may be rewarded by the sight of a Mourning Cloak. Despite what the poets may think, the idea of a butterfly when there's snow on the ground is not so far-fetched.

Laurel Sherwood is the editor of Butterfly Garden News, a publication of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). NABA membership is open to all who are interested in non-consumptive, recreational butterflying including listing, gardening, observation, photography, rearing, and conservation. Members receive quarterly issues of Butterfly Garden News and American Butterflies magazine. Contact NABA at 4 Delaware Road, Morristown, NJ 07960 for more information.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, February 9 8 p.m.
Royal Botanical Gardens Centre
680 Plains Road West, Burlington

Nature: The Spectacular, the Scarce and the Sometimes Secret

Robert McCaw
Professional Nature Photographer

Next Month

Monday, March 9 8:00 p.m.
The Galapagos
Glenn Barrett

Plant Study Group

Next Meeting
Wednesday, February 18 7:30 p.m.
34 Jasmine Street, Hamilton

The Plant Study Group is looking to be informal, interesting and interactive. Meet at Pam's house, 34 Jasmine Street, Hamilton.

Organizer: Pam Watts 388-4482

Junior Naturalists' Club

Saturday, February 28 - 7-9 pm
RBG Nature Centre

Nature At Night

Whooo's out there? We'll have a howling good time listening for nighttime noisemakers, and checking out some pretty famous stars. Dress warmly, paying special attention to your feet because we'll have to stand and listen for short periods of time. Note the time change.

Bird Study Group

Monday, February 16 7:30 p.m.
Canada Centre for Inland Waters
867 Lakeshore Road, Burlington
(under the skyway bridge)

This is an informal meeting featuring a discussion of recent bird sightings, an identification session and a workshop, film or set of slides about some aspect of birding. If you are a beginning birder, come out to learn more about birds. If you are an experienced birder, come out to share your knowledge and enthusiasm.

This month: Presentation on nest boxes by Don Wills

Organizer: Lois Evans 545-8171

WANTED

Articles are needed for the Wood Duck. The cupboard is nearly bare. We need material on all subjects.

Let us know about the interesting sightings you have made. Bring to our attention the issues that you believe are important to naturalists and our community.

Please send submissions to **Don McLean, 68-151 Gateshead Crescent, Stoney Creek,Ontario L8G 3W1.** The phone number is (905) 664-8796.

You can also e-mail submissions to: **don.mclean@hwcn.org**.

Deadline for submissions is usually the membership meeting before the issue appears.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1 to May 15
NIAGARA PENISULA HAWK WATCH
At Beamer Memorial Conservation Area on Ridge Rd. above the escarpment in Grimsby. Counters are on hand daily. If you need help with identification of birds, seek out HNC members for assistance. A south wind produces the better days. Leader: Mike Street 648-3737

Saturday, February 7, 9:00-3:30 pm
BARC COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
Canada Centre for Inland Waters
Topic: Hamilton Harbour's Eastern Entrance: A Green or Grey Future? A free public forum on Windermere Basin, the Beach Strip, Red Hill Valley and Confederation Park. For more info contact BARC at 525-9140 ext.27405.

Welcome to the Club!

We welcome the following new members to the HNC family.
Ron and Betty Barker
Ruth, Wayne and Martin Barrett
Brian Berry and family
Jack and Cathy Hanna
Ross Hotchkiss
J.K., Jane and Jalyn Neysmith

Need a Ride?

If you need a ride to the Club's Membership Meetings, call any member of the Board who will arrange a ride for you! Members of the Board of Directors, together with their phone numbers, are listed on the back page. Guests are always welcome at our meetings.

HNC Board of Directors 1997-98

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Vice-President:
Pierre Arnold 648-2519
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Gillian Quick 627-4714
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Program:
Glenn Barrett 546-9764
Publicity:
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Frank Morley 575-0668
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John Hannah 627-1453
Plant Study Group Leader:
Pam Watts 388-4482
Mailing Co-ordinator:
Norm Ralston 383-1397
FON Representative:
Wolfgang Luft 681-2276
Volunteer Coordinator:
Pierre Arnold 648-2519
Bird Study Group Leader:
Lois Evans 545-8171

Birding Hotline: 648-9537

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

Membership Fees 1997-98

Life Membership	$350.00
Single Membership	25.00
Senior/Student Single Membership	20.00
Senior/Student Joint Membership	25.00
Family Membership	30.00
Junior Naturalists - first child	40.00
Junior Naturalists - additional children	25.00
Honorary Life Member	None

HNC Publications

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Wood Duck

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The Hamilton Naturalists' Club
Westdale P.O. Box 89052
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Editor: Don McLean
68 - 151 Gateshead Crescent
Stoney Creek, ON L8G 3W1
e-mail: don.mclean@hwcn.org

Artist: Keith Dieroff
Editorial Committee: Clive Baugh
Keith Dieroff, Rob Dobos
Lois Evans, Matt Mills, Jean Stollard

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